THE NATURE, DESIGN, AND GENERAL RULES OF THE UNITED SOCIETIES IN LONDON, BRISTOL, KINGSWOOD, NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE, &c.

THE NINETEENTH EDITION.

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RULES, &c.

I. IN the latter End of the Year 1739, eight or ten Perſons came to me in *London*, who appeared to be deeply convinced of ſin, and earneſtly groaning for Redemption. They deſired (as did two or three more the next day) that I would ſpend ſome time with them in prayer, and adviſe them how to flee from the wrath to come; which they ſaw continually hanging over their heads. That we might have more time for this great work, I appointed a day when they might all come together, which from thenceforward they did every week, namely on *Thurſday* in the evening. To theſe, and as many more as deſired to join with them, (for their number increaſed daily) I gave thoſe advices from time to time which I judged moſt needful for them; and we always concluded our meeting with prayer ſuited to their ſeveral neceſſities.

2. This was the riſe, of the UNITED SOCIETY; firſt in *London*, and then in other Places. Such a Society is no other than "*A company of men* having the form and ſeeking the power *of godlineſs, united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their ſalvation.*"

3. That it may the more eaſily be diſcerned, whether they are indeed working out their own Salvation, each Society is divided into ſmaller Companies, called Claſſes, according to their reſpective Places of Abode. There are about twelve Perſons in every Claſs; one of whom is ſtiled *The Leader*.---It is his buſineſs,

I. To ſee each Perſon in his Claſs, once a Week at leaſt, in order

To inquire how their Souls proſper;

To adviſe, reprove, comfort, or exhort, as Occaſion may require;

To receive what they are willing to give, toward the Relief of the Poor.

II. To meet the Miniſter and the Stewards of the Society once a Week; in order

To

To inform the Minister of any that are Sick, or of any that walk Disorderly, and will not be reproved.

To pay to the Stewards what they have received of their several Classes in the Week preceding: And

To shew their Account of what each Person has contributed.

4. There is one only Condition previously required of those who desire admission into these Societies, *a Desire to flee from the Wrath to come, to be saved from their Sins*: But, wherever this is really fixed in the Soul, it will be shewn by its Fruits. It is therefore expected of all who continue therein, that they should continue to evidence their Desire of Salvation.

First, By doing no harm, by avoiding Evil in every kind; especially that which is most generally practised. Such is

The taking the Name of God in vain:

The profaning the Day of the Lord, either by doing ordinary Work thereon, or by buying or selling:

Drunkenness, *buying or selling spirituous Liquors; or drinking them*, unless in cases of extreme Necessity:

Fighting, quarrelling, brawling; Brother *going to Law* with Brother; returning Evil

for Evil, or Railing for Railing: the *uſing many Words* in buying or ſelling:

The *buying or ſelling uncuſtomed Goods:*

The *giving or taking things on uſury:* i. e. unlawful intereſt:

Uncharitable or *unprofitable* Converſation; particularly ſpeaking evil of Magiſtrates, or of Miniſters:

Doing to others as we would not they ſhould do unto us:

Doing what we know is not for the glory of God: As

The *putting on of gold and coſtly Apparel:* particularly, *the wearing of Calaſhes, High-heads, or enormous Bonnets:*

The *taking ſuch Diverſions* as cannot be uſed in the Name of the Lord Jeſus:

The *ſinging* thoſe *Songs*, or *reading* thoſe *Books*, which do not tend to the knowledge or love of God:

Softneſs and needleſs ſelf-indulgence:

Laying up treaſure upon earth:

Borrowing without a probability of paying; or taking up Goods without a probability of paying for them.

5. It is expected of all who continue in theſe Societies, that they ſhould continue to evidence their Deſire of Salvation,

Secondly, By doing good, by being in every kind merciful after their power, as they

they have Opportunity, doing good of every poſſible ſort, and as far as is poſſible to all Men;

To their Bodies, of the ability which God giveth, by giving Food to the Hungry, by clothing the Naked, by viſiting or helping them that are Sick, or in Priſon.

To their Souls, by inſtructing, *reproving*, or exhorting all we have any intercourſe with: trampling under-foot that enthuſiaſtic Doctrine of Devils, that "We are not to do good, unleſs *our Hearts be free to it.*"

By doing good eſpecially to them that are of the Houſehold of Faith, or groaning ſo to be: employing them preferably to others, buying one of another, helping each other in Buſineſs; and ſo much the more, becauſe the World will love its own, and them *only*.

By all poſſible *Diligence and Frugality*, that the Goſpel be not blamed.

By running with Patience the Race that is ſet before them, *denying themſelves, and taking up their croſs daily;* ſubmitting to bear the Reproach of Chriſt; to be as the filth and off-ſcouring of the World; and looking that Men ſhould *ſay all manner of evil of them falſely for the Lord's ſake.*

6. It is expected of all who deſire to continue in theſe Societies, that they ſhould continue

continue to evidence their Desire of Salvation:

Thirdly, By attending on all the Ordinances of God: such are

The public Worship of God;

The Ministry of the Word, either read or expounded;

The Supper of the Lord;

Family and private Prayer;

Searching the Scriptures: and

Fasting or Abstinence.

7. These are the General Rules of our Societies; all which we are taught of God to observe, even in his written Word, the only Rule, and the sufficient Rule both of our Faith and Practice. And all these we know his Spirit writes on every truly awakened heart. If there be any among us who observe them not, who habitually break any of them, let it be made known unto them who watch over that soul as they that must give an account. We will admonish him of the Error of his ways; we will bear with him for a season. But then if he repent not, he hath no more place among us. We have delivered our own souls.

May 1, 1743. JOHN WESLEY.
CHARLES WESLEY.

A

PRAYER

FOR THOSE

Who are convinced of Sin.

1 O Moſt compaſſionate High Prieſt,
Full of all grace we know thou art,
Faith puts its hands upon thy breaſt,
And feels beneath thy panting heart.

2 Thy panting heart for ſinners bleeds;
Thy mercies and compaſſion move;
The groaning ſpirit intercedes,
And yearn the bowels of thy love.

3 Hear then the pleading Spirit's prayer,
(The Spirit's will to thee is known,)
For all who now thy ſufferings ſhare;
And ſtill for full redemption groan:

4 Poor tempted ſouls, with tempeſts toſſed,
And ſtrangers to a moment's peace,
Diſconſolate, afflicted, loſt,
Loſt in a howling wilderneſs:

5 Torn

5 Torn with an endleſs war within,
Vexéd with the fleſh and ſpirit's ſtriſe,
And ſtruggling in the toils of ſin,
And agonizing into life.

6 O let the priſoner's mournful cries
As incenſe in thy ſight appear:
Their humble wailings pierce the ſkies,
If haply they may feel thee near!

7 The captive exiles make their moans,
From ſin impatient to be free;
Call home, call home the baniſhéd ones!
Lead captive their captivity!

8 Shew them the blood that bought their peace,
The anchor of their ſtedfaſt hope;
And bid their guilty terror ceaſe,
And bring the ranſoméd priſoners up.

9 Out of the deep regard their cries,
The fallen raiſe, the mourners cheer;
O Sun of Righteouſneſs ariſe,
And ſcatter all their doubt and fear.

10 Pity the day of feeble things;
O gather every halting ſoul,
And drop ſalvation from thy wings,
And make the contrite ſinner whole.

11 Stand by them in the fiery hour,
Their feebleneſs of mind defend,
And in their weakneſs ſhew thy powér,
And make them patient to the end.

12 O ſatisfy their ſoul in drought,
Give them thy ſaving health to ſee,
And let thy mercy find them out;
And let thy mercy reach to me.

13 Haſt

13 Haſt thou the work of grace begun,
And brought them to the birth in vain?
O let thy children ſee the ſun!
Let all their ſouls be born again!

14 Relieve the ſouls whoſe croſs we bear,
For whom the ſuffering members mourn;
Anſwer our faith's effectual prayer:
Bid every ſtruggling child be born.

15 Hark how thy turtle-dove complains,
And ſee us weep for Sion's woe:
Pity thy ſuffering people's pains;
Avenge us of our inbred foe.

16 Whom thou haſt bound, O Lord, expel!
And take his armour all away;
The man of ſin, the child of hell,
The devil in our nature ſlay.

17 Him and his works at once deſtroy,
The being of all ſin eraſe,
And turn our mourning into joy,
And clothe us with the robes of praiſe.

18 Then when our ſufferings all are paſt,
O let us pure and perfect be,
And gain our calling's prize at laſt,
For ever ſanctified in thee.